

**AMENDED CLAIM SET:**

1. (previously presented) A sample suction apparatus, comprising:
  - a first member, a second member, and a third member capable of linearly reciprocating along the same direction and spaced from each other, the second member being located between the first member and the third member;
  - an elastically compressible spacer inserted between the second member and the third member;
  - a suction needle provided on the third member, the suction needle pointing to the first member; and
  - a single drive source provided on the third member, said single drive source adapted to perform: a first action of shifting the first member toward the second member such that the first member makes contact with a portion of a specimen vessel while maintaining a predetermined distance between the second member and the third member by elasticity of the spacer; a second action of shifting the second member together with the third member toward the first member until the second member makes contact with another portion of the specimen vessel such that the specimen vessel is sandwiched between the first and second members; and a third action of shifting the third member, against the elasticity of the spacer, toward the first member to bring the third member closer to the second member while maintaining the specimen vessel

sandwiched between the first member and the second member such that the suction needle is inserted in the specimen vessel.

2. (previously presented) A sample suction apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising:

a rail,

wherein the first, second, and third members include three sliders slidably mounted on the rail.

3. (previously presented) A sample suction apparatus, comprising:  
a first member, a second member, and a third member capable of linearly reciprocating along the same direction and spaced from each other, the second member being located between the first member and the third member;

a drive source provided on the third member to increase and reduce a distance between the first member and the third member;

an elastically compressible spacer inserted between the second member and the third member; and

a suction needle provided on the third member, the suction needle pointing to the first member,

wherein the drive source is adapted to reduce the distance between the first member and the third member to perform: a first action of shifting the first member toward the third member to contact the first member with a portion of

a specimen vessel; a second action of shifting the second member together with the third member toward the first member to contact the second member with another portion of the specimen vessel so that the specimen vessel is sandwiched between the first and second members; and a third action of shifting the third member toward the first member to compress the spacer to bring the third member closer to the second member so that the suction needle is inserted in the specimen vessel, and

wherein the drive source includes an air cylinder having a piston rod, the air cylinder being provided on the third member and a distal end of the piston rod being connected with the first member.

4. (previously presented) A sample suction apparatus according to claim 2, further comprising:

a stopper for restricting movement of the first member toward the third member;

a substrate on which the rail and the stopper are provided; and

a biasing member for biasing the third member toward a direction opposite to the first member.

5. (previously presented) A sample suction apparatus according to claim 3, further comprising:

a stopper for restricting the movement of the first member toward the third member;

a substrate on which the rail and the stopper are provided; and

a biasing member for biasing the third member toward a direction opposite to the first member.

6. (original) A sample suction apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the spacer is a compressible spring.

7. (previously presented) A sample suction apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising:

a sensor for detecting that the specimen vessel is sandwiched between the first member and the second member.

8. (previously presented) A sample suction apparatus, comprising:  
a first member, a second member, and a third member capable of linearly reciprocating along the same direction and spaced from each other, the second member being located between the first member and the third member;

a drive source provided on the third member to enlarge and reduce a distance between the first member and the third member;

an elastically compressible spacer inserted between the second member and the third member;

a suction needle provided on the third member, the suction needle pointing to the first member; and

a washing bath provided in the second member for washing the suction needle,

wherein the drive source is adapted to reduce the distance between the first member and the third member to perform: a first action of shifting the first member toward the third member to contact the first member with a portion of a specimen vessel; a second action of shifting the second member together with the third member toward the first member to contact the second member with another portion of the specimen vessel so that the specimen vessel is sandwiched between the first and second members; and a third action of shifting the third member toward the first member to compress the spacer to bring the third member closer to the second member so that the suction needle is inserted in the specimen vessel.

9. (previously presented) A sample suction apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the specimen vessel contains blood as a specimen.

10. (cancelled).

11. (cancelled).

12. (currently amended) A sample suction apparatus according to claim 3, further comprising:

a resilient member that urges the piston rod to extend in a direction ~~the increases~~ increasing a distance between the first member and the third member, the resilient member having a spring coefficient smaller than a spring coefficient of the spacer.

13. (cancelled).

14. (cancelled).